

JESUS – WHO IS HE? (MK. 3:20-35)

At the opening of the seventh seal in the Book of Revelation, *there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour (8:1)* ... From time to time during Christ's ministry on earth I'm sure there were also occasions in Heaven when there was absolute silence as they watched on. Certainly there would have been silence as Jesus died on the cross, and as He was embalmed in the tomb. Surely another time would have been when they awaited the answer to the question Jesus asked His disciples, *Mk. 8:29 whom say ye that I am?* ... The world wasn't sure ... Some thought He might have been a reincarnation of John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the other prophets raised from the dead.

Similarly today, people aren't altogether sure about who or what Jesus exactly was. Someone told me recently she was an atheist, and yet, during the time she spoke with me she mentioned the Name of God more often than I would usually hear from most Christians! Of course, she was using His Name in vain.

Many would be prepared to tell you Jesus was a good person and He taught good patterns for life. He was a good example by which you should try and match your conduct. He was a teacher of good morals and ethics, and if the world would listen to Him it would be a better place. He wasn't necessarily God, and yet there was something special about Him that set Him apart.

Well, the question continues to confront people, *whom say ye that I am?* Jesus claimed He was God, so if we do not believe Him, we imply He was a liar. If you don't believe He existed, then He is a deception! Maybe you mightn't put it in such contentious terms ... maybe He is not a liar, but maybe because He thinks He is God He was confused, and suffered from delusions of grandeur ... Maybe He 'represents' God in some way, but He actually 'went over the top' claiming to *be* God. If someone came into our church and said they were God, we would think there is something wrong with them psychologically, - they are 'a bit *loopy*'! Is that what many thought about Jesus? Yes, some of them did, in fact, some of them went even further and diagnosed Him as being under influence of, and working for, Satan. ... Either the people who said these things were right, or, what He said about *Himself* is *actually* true!

There is no middle ground, - either He is God, or He is not. If He is not God, He is a deceiver and a fraud. Yet, if He *is* God, then everything He has said is true and must be accepted as truth.

What if it is true that Jesus is neither a liar nor a lunatic but that He is Who He says He is? ... That He is God, He was born of a virgin, He lived a sinless life, He had power over the physical world and over the spiritual domain, He had power over life and He had power over death, and He had power over God's creation ... *Who else could He be if He was not telling the truth?!*

Then some people would try and dodge what the Bible says, "How do you know what you read in the Bible is true?!" ... Don't let's get away from the question, "Who else could Jesus be if He was not telling the truth?" ... This Book has lasted longer than any other book. The message of this Book is spread across the world today at a rate its enemies cannot stop. Either the Christ about which it speaks is the master of all deception, or He *is* the Son of God, very God Himself ... as He claimed to be!

It is so important to get this issue correct for to get it otherwise has eternally devastating consequences. All four Gospel writers, - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, - together present Jesus as God, and the Son of God, and through believing in Him alone is salvation gained. It is not sufficient merely to believe in a Man called Jesus and yet not willing to believe what He said and what He claimed, and to take it as your own. And the ultimate purpose for why He came was to purchase your salvation and mine. ... Believe in Who He claimed to be, - the only Saviour and Lord that can bring the sinner to Heaven, saved by free and sovereign grace. Trust in the sacrifice He offered for you at Calvary. It is only when you have the right view of the Lord Jesus Christ you will be on the right path of salvation, otherwise you die and go to Hell and you suffer forever.

So far we have watched as Jesus carried out His ministry in Galilee. He has been healing multitudes from illness, and He has been freeing the enslaved from the bondage of the devil. It has been made clear to the people watching that He is demonstrating the power of God. From their vantage point, they could not legitimately come to any other objective conclusion, *Mk. 2:12 they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.*

However, so far in this Gospel of Mark there has not been anyone who has yet pronounced believing faith in Christ. We have had the testimony of God the Father, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (1:11)*, and the testimony of the demon, *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God (1:11)* ... but we haven't yet had a human testimony to faith. ...

The evidence was stacking up before them but the people were not making the connection as to Who Jesus really was.

From their vantage point, how strong a possibility was it that Jesus was someone deranged and out to make a fool of these people? We like 'to keep an eye on' these things for the Bible says it is one of the signs that will precede the second coming of Christ. In His conversation with the disciples outside the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus informed them, Mt. 24:4 Take heed that no man deceive you. ⁵ For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many ... Now, think about that ... How many people have you heard of that has announced themselves to be Buddha, or Mohammed ... or Zeus, or Hercules, or Jupiter, or Baal? I haven't heard of any! ... But I have heard of those who identify themselves as Christ, - that's how the devil wants to deceive many ... and he *will* succeed for a time in a final grand deception. ... I Thess. 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God ... Rev. 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months. ⁶ And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. ⁷ And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ⁸ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

I remember in my student days visiting a psychiatric hospital in Glasgow and meeting three of its patients. One of them was convinced the country was being overrun by fascists, and they were everywhere, - you could see in his eyes his sincerity, - he really believed it! They were behind the television, and they were in his wardrobe ... they were everywhere! ... But that was why that patient was in a secure psychiatric unit, - he was suffering from a severe mental problem. ... Was Jesus on a level with that kind of person? No, He most certainly was not. No one ever spoke like Jesus. No one ever did the mighty works Jesus did. No one ever heard anything bad about Him ... only the good He did for multitudes of people.

Look at verse twenty, *And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.* He is most probably in Peter and Andrew's house in Capernaum, - His headquarters for the Galilee ministry (cf. 1:29). He is human as well as divine, and He is hungry and so a meal had been prepared for Him.

However, the crowds poured in from the surrounding area and they wanted Him to heal them, - twenty-four hours in the day would not have been enough to meet all the needs of these great multitudes who kept on coming to Him! Some of them were ill. Some of them were demon-possessed ... and they knew, - they had heard, - the testimonies from their friends that Jesus could eradicate their problems ... and so they were coming in their hordes!

You can see them ... It will only take a minute, Jesus! I need Your attention! Stop what You are doing and come and meet my need. ... They were all demanding the same. They weren't prepared to allow Him a few minutes to sit down and eat a meal ... and to meet His own bodily and physical needs! They had no concern for Him ... only what He could do for them.

However, enough is enough ... v.21 when his friends heard *of it*, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. ... Actually, that was an awful thing to say, He is beside himself! It is another way of saying they thought He had gone crazy! They thought He had 'lost it'! ... He has been overworking!

So there they were ... They were hearing and watching all the commotion outside ... They had heard and seen enough, and they went out and *got* Him! ... they went out to lay hold on him: ... *Why?* ... for they said, He is beside himself. He is coming out with all kinds of strange things, and making all sorts of weird pronouncements ... and so they went out and unceremoniously pulled Him in before He would say or do anything else ... and before the crowd would lynch Him! ... They really thought Jesus had 'flipped', for that is what the word means, Ἐξέστη, confused! It literally means 'out of one's own senses' ... 'lost it'! They reckoned He wasn't in control any longer. They came to the conclusion he's irrational, illogical, insane, totally detached from reality ... and behaving like a madman!

But really ... if they had stepped back and saw what Jesus was doing ... They had no grounds for coming to such a conclusion for since they had known Him He had shown no evidence of being deranged ... And even now, there was nothing they could put together that would bring them to such a conclusion ... After all, what had He done? ... He was healing people, casting out demons, and teaching with such authority the likes of which had never been seen or heard before! No matter what they thought, there was absolutely no grounds whatsoever to come up with the conclusion, He is beside himself, He is mad. They were arguing against the evidence.

That is what the world does, - they argue against the evidence. It is as plain as plain can be Who Jesus is, but they won't accept Him! Imagine if this world turned to Jesus and accepted Him as Saviour and Lord, what a different place this would be! Proverbs 14:34 tells us *righteousness exalteth a nation ...* and some day the King of Righteousness will return, and He will take over the reins of power ... and the first thing He will do is to drive out the enemy and imprison him, Is. 24:21 *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.* ²² *And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.* ²³ *Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.*

And during His reign of righteousness such things as this will be the norm, Is. 11:6 *the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.* ⁷ *And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.* ⁸ *And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.* ⁹ *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. ...* But the people to whom Jesus spoke would not have Him ... and neither do the majority of people today want Him. They would rather muddle their way from one disaster to another until it gets all out of control! They would rather do that than turn to Jesus!

Then along came the mother of Jesus and His brothers ... more correctly, His *half*-brothers, and He also had *half*-sisters, Mk. 6:3 *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? ...* And they came onto the scene, as in Matthew's account (12:46). ... And by the way, there is no truth whatsoever in the Roman Catholic myth Mary was a 'perpetual virgin' ... for James, Joses [*Joseph*], Judas, Simon and their sisters is proof!

What about Jesus' family? Well, His mother Mary would have been very concerned about her eldest Son. It is not supposed to be, but in many families the eldest son holds a special place, especially in the mother's affections. And, of course, His brothers would have been concerned for their *mother* being concerned ... In Jn. 7 Jesus was in Galilee, and He was under threat of death for saying the things He was saying, v.1 *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. ...*

The brothers weren't too sure *what* was going on so they had a word with their brother Jesus, - basically, they were saying, Maybe it's about time You got out of here! They 'dressed it up a bit', but basically that's what they were saying, v.3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. ⁴ For *there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. ...* Now, why were his brothers saying this? They wanted Him to *run* for neither did his brethren believe in him (v.5).

That sheds some light on why they were there in Capernaum, with their mother. Through all the years Mary had raised Jesus, she didn't think there was anything 'strange' about Him, ... and that was because the angel had told her before He was born *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest (Lk. 1:32)* ... But, on the other hand, 'it comes out' that the brothers *did* think there was something not right, for His brothers were like the crowd ... they did not believe! In fact, Jn. 1:11 takes on a very personal significance for Jesus, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not ...* not even His brothers, at first!

There are shadows of Joseph here, - *Joseph's* brothers did not believe his claims either. ... What must it have been like, though, for the brothers of Jesus growing up? Jesus never had to be scolded or disciplined. He did everything perfectly, always at the right time. Indeed, what must it have been like for them! ... And there is another observation we can make here ... Often the most difficult place to make an impact for Christ is in your own family ... and Jesus knew that to be so true, even in *His* own family.

But really ... if they had stepped back and saw what He was doing ... They had no grounds for not believing in Him. Actually, if it had not dawned on them *before* Who He was, it should have dawned on them *then*! ... He was healing people, casting out demons, and teaching with such authority the likes of which had never been seen before!

So, His mother and brothers had arrived and were standing outside. They sent someone in with a message telling Him they were outside waiting ... Why didn't they go in and tell Him themselves? They didn't, because they couldn't, - the place was so packed they couldn't get in! ... ³² *And the multitude sat about him.*

So, here is Mary looking for her Son ... *again*. Away back when He was only twelve years of age her and Joseph were looking for Him in the streets of Jerusalem (Lk. 2:41ff.) ... and here, she was looking for Him again. Back then, He had told His parents, Lk. 2:49 *How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* ... Once again, in this home surrounded by the multitudes, He continued to *be about [His] Father's business*. He never took 'time off', - His Father's business was the reason He came into this world. His Father had sent Him to be the Redeemer and Saviour of the lost, and that was His work, His priority.

And along to Him came the message, v.32 *Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.* ... They are outside waiting for You, and they want you to go out and have a word with them.

If you didn't know Jesus, you would take offence at the next statement He came out with, v.33 *He answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?* ³⁴ *And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!* ³⁵ *For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.* On the face of it, that sounds disrespectful and ill-mannered ... not what you would expect Jesus to say.

Well, He is not saying, "I don't know My family", for He obviously did. Neither is He saying, I don't want to have anything more to do with them, for the fact He requested from the cross that John the disciple would look after His mother (Jn. 19:27) shows His earthly family *was* precious to Him.

Okay, He loved His mother ... maybe He wasn't so keen on His brothers? Well, yes He was because Acts 1:14 tells us who was in the upper room with the disciples, before and on the Day of Pentecost, *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.* He *did* love His brothers, and His sisters. So this is not a statement diminishing His love for His family. In fact, two of His brothers, - James and Jude (Judas) wrote the two epistles. In their introductions, James, - who was to become the leader of the Jerusalem church, - described himself, *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*, and similarly Jude, *Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.* So there was no animosity or hostility from Jesus towards them. And neither did James and Jude use their family-tie with Jesus to 'climb up the ladder' within the new Church.

They actually understood what Jesus was saying, - even though they had not yet accepted fully Who He was. ... I'm sure when they looked back at that day, they saw the true significance of His words for He was telling the whole crowd the only relationship which matters, - which supersedes time and lasts into eternity, - is the relationship a person has with their Father in Heaven. To belong to the Family of God is such a great privilege for it means He knows you, and you belong to Him, along with all the Redeemed ... across the world, throughout the centuries, and those yet to be saved.

No one is a Christian on their own. We are part of a family ... a great number for whom God sent His Son to die on the cross of Calvary. It does not matter who you are, Christ shed the same amount of blood to save you, as He shed for me. He loves you to the same everlasting capacity as He loves me, - we are all equal in Christ Jesus. That is why He wants us to love Him back ... Our love can never reach the depths of the love He has for us, but nonetheless, we love Him more today than we loved Him yesterday.

When you think of what He did for you, how could you give Him second-best?! ... And that was what Jesus was saying to this crowd. He was saying, yes, of course, I love my family and they are precious to Me, - My mother, My late father, My brothers and My sisters ... but *whosoever shall do the will of God*, - whosoever will trust in Me as Saviour and Lord, and is obedient to their calling, - *the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother*.

Notice also, He did not venerate His mother or set her apart as some kind of object for worship. Yes, she is 'blessed amongst women', and 'the fruit of her womb' are also blessed (Lk. 1:42), - her sons and her daughters, Jesus' half-brothers and half-sisters, - but she was still a woman in need of God's grace for salvation, as she herself declared in what is known as the *Magnificat*, Lk. 1:47 *my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*.

We are a privileged people, and sometimes I don't think we appreciate it as much as we ought to. People then and now reject what Jesus said, and by doing so they basically call Him a liar and a fraud. Others, condescendingly patronise Him as some kind of a failed 'wannabee' ... to the point of making Him look ridiculous. All those important things He said hold no value whatsoever ... The judge Him as being either a *Liar* or a *Lunatic* ... But no, He is neither for He is *Lord*. He has outlasted all His ancient critics, and He will outlast all the present ones too. ... May God give us a fresh understanding of all He has blessed us with, to the glory of His most precious Name! Amen.